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Prepared for the V Symposium on East Timor of Oporto University by
Renato Constantino, Jr.
Chairperson
Philippine Convenors for the Proposed International Conference on East Timor in Manila

The Context of Philippine Solidarity for East Timor

The Philippines is located in Southeast Asia. However, due to its colonial history, it looks at itself and the world through American blue eyes. It is in this context that it is important for Filipinos to locate East Timor, its people and their struggle.

Out of four centuries of protest and revolt against Spain, the Filipino nation was born when the successful revolution against Spain was launched in 1896. By 1898, the Filipinos were in control of the entire archipelago except for a few isolated and insignificant outposts and the walled city of Manila. But a new coloniser was already waiting in the wings. Victory was snatched from the Filipino revolutionaries. A new and more insidious colonialism was to be foisted on the Philippines. After a long and bloody Philippine-American War, where over a million Filipino lives were lost, the Americans, with the collaboration of most of the Filipino elite, took control. They then robbed us of our history, cut off our tongue, and molded our consciousness into that of little brown Americans.

But before anyone raises any questions about the direction this paper is taking let me say that I am not trying to turn this symposium on East Timor into one on the Philippines. I am merely trying to put in context the Philippine solidarity we offer the Maubere people.

The Filipino people are now in the long and arduous process of completing the Philippine Revolution of 1896 to regain our true identity in freedom and dignity.

The struggle in East Timor calls on all freedom-loving peoples to support their just cause. But in addition to moral and humanitarian imperatives, valid reasons enough to elicit solidarity, we see the East Timorese people's struggle as a source of strength in our own struggle for freedom, justice and democracy. We see similarities and lessons that may help contribute to our efforts to reawaken our slumbering mass memory and add flame to our struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism. In turn, we hope that our own efforts towards liberation will similarly inspire the Maubere people to resolutely keep up their struggle for self-determination.

Our solidarity, therefore, is simply part of the cycle of mutual exchange between sisters and brothers, a strengthening of the bond among those who fight against oppression and for genuine freedom.

In the concrete, the broad progressive movement in the Philippines is prepared to host an international conference on East Timor not only to bring further attention to the issue but to bring East Timor to Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, which has remained largely silent.

While it is fully our intention to bring into the conference the active participation of mainstream political parties and prominent Filipino personalities, the core of our conference organizing group (which will subsequently be converted into a Filipino solidarity network for East Timor) is initially composed of all the major progressive political tendencies, parliamentarians of the street if you will, (national democrats, social democrats, popular democrats, communists, and socialists). I cannot underscore enough the fact that these groups have different visions and ideological perspectives. But I must

equally stress the fact that all are prepared to subsume their differences to points of unity. All are prepared to seek out areas of common concern to work out common goals. And in spite of their contradictions, all are actively seeking to reach consensus on various issues and at different levels and act together. The East Timor question is one such basis of unity.

(My colleague will discuss the particulars of the proposed international conference.)

In closing, allow me to offer my personal solidarity with the people of East Timor through a poem:

BLACK AND NOT ALONE

Alien cultures
Different histories
Faces I do not know
Names stranger still
Many tongues my ears cannot hear
But my heart understands.
I am she who has not been degraded a thousand times
For we are not around.
He is me who has not been exterminated
For we do not exist.
They are my people who have no tomorrow
For we have been robbed of our past.
Because we never were.
But I look into his eyes and feel her heart beat...
We are alive
We sing in the night of tomorrow's sunrise
We live for today and fight for our birth.
She called me black
He called me brother
And I am
We are
But we fight alone.
In our little worlds we are alone
In the solitude of our togetherness we struggle for freedom.
I cannot fight your battles,
You cannot win mine.
But cheer me on
As I do you.
We shall intensify our struggles
Even as we draw inspiration from each other.
And when we have won our victories,
We will embrace across the oceans
In the dignity of our liberation,
Never again to be alone.

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the Program in detail:

PROPOSED PROGRAM OF THE "WORLD CONFERENCE ON EAST TIMOR AND INDONESIA" TO BE HELD IN MANILA, PHILIPPINES. APRIL, 1994

FIRST DAY (Begins mid-afternoon)

Welcome
Introductions
Greetings
Orientation
Committees formation
Dinner
Cultural Presentations

SECOND DAY

AM

Cultural Presentation

Keynote Speech : "Struggles of Asian Peoples" (By Aung Syun Kyi) Proposed Speaker: or her representative)

Cultural Presentation

A Discussion of the Legal Basis of Independence and Self-Determination Struggles : Focus on The East Timor Experience

~~(By Richard Falk)~~. Proposed Speaker: Richard Falk

Cultural Presentation

(If time permits, workshops will be conducted on the preceding topics)

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PM

THE EAST TIMOR STRUGGLE AND CURRENT SITUATION

Cultural Presentation

(Panel presentation; panelists to decide their respective topics/themes. We would like to see however that the perspectives of the East Timorese struggle from the homefront, diplomatic, coalition, youth perspectives be discussed)

Cultural Presentation

Workshops (per topic)

THIRD DAY

AM

Cultural Presentation

Proposed Speakers:

The Current Indonesian Climate and Prospects for East Timor Resistance (By Abdulrachman or Romo Mangun Wijaya)

Prospects for Asian Solidarity for East Timor and Other Struggles

Proposed Speakers:

(By Vice Pres. Joseph Estrada, Sen. Bobby Tanada or former Senate president Jovito Salonga)

Cultural Presentation

Workshops

PM

Workshops

- resolutions
- campaigns
- action plans
- conference declaration/statements

FOURTH DAY

AM

Culminating Plenary/Cultural Presentation

- presentation of resolutions
- sharing of plans/campaigns
- reading of conference statement/declarations/communique
- formal end of conference

PM

Caucuses

Press conferences

SOLIDARITY EVENING (Cultural Presentations)

We are likewise proposing that the conference be dubbed "World Conference on East Timor and Indonesia" instead of "International..." This may have more media impact and mileage as too many "international conferences " are being held everywhere.

With regards to the four East Timorese speakers, we will request them to decide among themselves what topic/theme they will respectively tackle.

As for the keynote speaker we propose Aung Syun Ki of Burma. Even if she cannot come, she can send a representative and her "presence" will add weight to the conference if she is to tackle the East Timor struggle from the perspective of Asian struggles.

We are still soliciting suggestions for our Indonesian and Asian speakers.

We will also strongly suggest that ~~the CNRM~~ our East Timorese partners make an Asian swing two to three months before the conference to identify/convince potential long-term Asian partners who will be invited to the conference and who can eventually make up the core for the Asian solidarity network for East Timor (ASIANET?). We think this is specially important to ensure concrete solidarity links among Asians. The secretariate can help in this endeavor.

The Catholic Institute for International Relations based in London and Asian Regional Exchange (ARENA) in Hongkong have given word that they are willing to co-sponsor the conference. We are also ~~yet~~ awaiting word from the Asian Center for Peoples Progress.

- Gus Miclat
Coordinator
World Conference on East Timor and Indonesia

Draft Letter of Invitation for the World Conference on East Timor and Indonesia to be held in Manila on April 1994

~~19 May 1993~~

Dear

Warmest greetings of solidarity and peace!

Something is happenning in ~~November~~ April in Manila. And we invite you to be part of it.

This is bringing home to Asia one of the world's most ~~legitimate~~ bloody, yet peoples struggles: the struggle for East Timor independence.

Since Indonesia forcibly annexed the country in 1975, East Timor has generated support from peoples around the globe specially in the west but has yet to galvanize solidarity where it belongs: Asia. Of course, this is hardly surprising considering the common authoritarian tendencies of Asian leaders specially that of ASEAN countries to which Indonesia plays a big brother role to the hilt.

But a legitimate peoples issue will always seek its just forum.

Thus international, Asian and Philippine NGOs and peoples organizations, together with other international institutions, agencies and solidarity groups long steeped in issues and struggles of human rights, peace and justice will convene a **"World Conference on East Timor and Indonesia"** in the Philippines in November.

The three-day conference will be attended by some 250 international luminaries including friends from East Timor and Indonesia. Three years after the Dili massacre ~~anniversary~~ the gathering will tackle the legal, political and cultural dimensions of the East Timorese struggle as it explores actions of getting the Indonesian government to formally negotiate with the East Timorese to finally bring freedom and justice to their bloodied and blighted Maubere nation.

A Philippine organizing group composed of patriotic and internationalist personalities and representatives from a broad progressive formation has been formed, with the Initiatives for International Dialogue backstopping for administrative and secretariate functions. IID is a professional Filipino international non-governmental organization working primarily for South-South solidarity and global education.

The conference will be held ~~at the equally historic Sulo Hotel~~ in Quezon City, Philippines. Other related caucuses and meetings are scheduled after the three-day conference proper.

Come and be part of this historic endeavor.

Come and enrich this gathering of kindred souls and colleagues.

Come and express concrete solidarity with our East Timorese friends.

Come and perhaps discover our own and common paths to peace, justice and progress.

Please fill up the attached registration form and send at once to the Conference Secretariate not later than _____.

We hope to see you in April. Meanwhile, we remain in steadfast solidarity.

Very truly yours,

~~RC CONSTANTINO JR~~
~~Chairman~~
Philippine Convenors and Organizing Group

~~AUGUSTO MICLAT EE~~
~~Conference Coordinator~~